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HOW SHALL THE MINISTRY BE PROVED?



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A SERMON.

DELIVERED AT THE INSTALATION

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REV. PHINEAS ROBINSON,

JEFFERSON, N. Y. Oct. 29, 1856;

BY

REV. J. S. PATTENGILL,

PASTOR OF THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, WALTON;

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

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WALTON:

BERRY & PINE,

BOOK AND JOB PRINTERS.

BLADE OFFICE, JANUARY 1857.

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S E R M O N .

MAKE FULL PROOF OF THY MINISTRY.—II. TIMOTHY IV. V.

This passage is a portion of the first pastoral charge, under the New Testament dispensation. Over the Church at Ephesus, Timothy was ordained as its first settled pastor. In this relation the Apostle Paul gave him a charge ; not by formal appointment, but by inspired authority.—This charge is a model summary of truth for all occasions like the present. It is fruitful in themes, well adapted to instruct both the Ministry and the Church, in the reciprocal duties of Pastor and people. Both should study it prayerfully, and apply it faithfully as the expression of the divine will to each.

The Apostle had been suddenly driven from Ephesus, by persecution, before he had completed the organization of the Church ; and before he had corrected existing errors from which the Church was likely to suffer. Paul instructs Timothy to complete this work ; and for this purpose the First Epistle to Timothy was evidently written. He is directed to discharge the duties of a local missionary in the Apostles absence—or to act the part of a conservator in matters of doctrine and practice as specified in the Epistle.

The second Epistle seems to have a double object in view ; to give Timothy charge as a minister of Christ, in his relation to the Church at Ephesus, and to request his presence at Rome as soon as possible. As if he might not be spared until Timothy should reach him at Rome he writes his last Epistle as a dying man. And, as if he might be spared, he urges Timothy to come to him with all diligence. Under such circumstances the message has an important significance.

It is the parting counsel of the most eminent of the Apostles. As a Father, he addresses Timothy as his dearly beloved son—enjoins him to hold fast the form of sound words—to endure hardness as a good soldier—to avoid entanglement with the affairs of this life—to correct errors of doctrine, and practice already apparent, and to show himself approved unto God by diligent study, so as to divide rightly the word of God to all.

He warns him that perilous times were approaching—that fables and forms of godliness would arise to supplant the gospel—that false teachers would be sought, to gratify the itching ears of deluded disciples ; and urges him to follow his own example of fidelity in all things through persecution and trial, to the final triumphs of the Cross. With a heroism which no battle-field ever exhibited, and with a triumph which no conqueror of kingdoms, or empires ever experienced, he utters as with dying breath this unparalleled charge, as the crowning work of God's chosen instrument of mercy to men.

" I charge thee therefore before *God* and the *Lord Jesus Christ* who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom—preach the word ! be instant in season, out of season. Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. Watch thou in all things ; do the work of an evangelist ; *make full proof of thy ministry*. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day, and not to me only but unto all those also that love his appearing."

I leave the battle-field, and lay aside my armor for the crown of victory. I leave the field of conflict to you, and to other soldiers of the Cross.

To all them that love the appearing of Jesus Christ the charge of the Apostle is addressed.

When Timothy had fought, and conquered—when he had finished his course, and received his crown, other soldiers were summoned to the same

field of strife, and of triumphs. The charge—make full proof, of thy ministry, is yet the trumpet call to battle with similar enemies, in view of similar conquests, and crowns.

This call is not only to the watchmen, and leader of God's elect, but to all who fill the ranks of that great army which no man can number.—They are to stand upon mount Zion with palms of victory in *their* hands. The same great battle is to be fought upon this ground ; not perhaps amidst violent persecutions, but amidst perils, in view of which, the text is a pertinent charge, and the promise connected, a much needed encouragement.

In these circumstances, *how shall the ministry be proved?*

To the consideration of this question, your earnest, and prayerful attention is now invited.

In the settlement of a pastor over a specific Church, the injunction of the text, naturally calls into account the reciprocal relations, and responsibilities of each party to the contract.

The efficient, and successful army, contemplates an efficient leader in command of an efficient and well trained soldiery. The skill of the general must be proved by the obedience, and courage of his troops. The full proof of the ministry contemplates the efficiency and co-operation of the Church—the rank and file of the army committed to their leadership. In the success of the artist much depends upon the material committed to his hands. So in the success of the ministry much depends upon the material, to be wrought into the spiritual temple of the Lord.

In the discussion of the question before us, we may first examine the evidence connected with the ministry.

The general duties of the ministry are well understood, so far as they lie upon the surface, and are open to the public eye. The efforts of the pulpit—the daily intercourse of life, the duties connected with the social meeting, and such as are required in the midst of affliction and bereavement, are those parts of a minister's work, which appear upon the surface, and upon which the public judgment is made up. But the more important duties and difficulties of his office, are beneath the surface, and concealed from the public eye. Many of these are of such a nature, that he cannot reveal them, without personal violence to his own feelings—or public injury to the cause of Christ.

Some of these we may state in this connection, without doing violence to either.

How the minister shall discharge the duties which he owes to his household, and not entangle himself with the affairs of this life ? is a

question not always easy to settle. The claims of the pulpit and the study, and the social demands of the people are not always in agreement.

The weak must be strengthened--the sick must be visited--the tempted must be counseled, the desponding encouraged, and the mourner comforted. Jealousies must be healed, and public scandal, and conflicting evils must have a medium of conservative influences, to prevent ruinous conflict. But who shall counsel, and comfort, and encourage, and hold up the minister of Christ, when his heart is sad, and desponding, and darkness beclouds his path?

The hopeless living must be warned, and won to Christ, or perish--the hopeless dead must receive a Christian burial after a life of active resistance to the gospel--and of unceasing opposition to the ministry.—Account must be rendered at the bar of God for the trusts of the gospel, and the souls of men—in view of that solemn position which the minister must ever occupy, between the living and the dead.

Any other man may provide for the future wants of his family, without sacrificing his Christian character, or Christian influence. But the minister cannot do this. Any other man may seek relaxation from crushing anxiety, and exhausting toil, but the poor minister has no resting place but the grave. His bow must ever be bent, his lamp must ever be burning. Any other man may receive commiseration for his frailties ; but the minister's faults are allowed no public pardon.

Any other man may have a home for himself and family, where the purposes and social affections of life may root downward, and grow upward, until ripened friendships are gathered in a good old age ; but the minister is a pilgrim, and a stranger, having no certain abiding place.—He has no home which frailty may not destroy—which caprice may not blast, and of which, neglect may not rob him. Other men in other professions, and employments, may add comforts, and conveniences to make home attractive for their *own* enjoyment as *their own* ; but the ministers relief, is, that discomforts are of short duration in any one locality, and are soon resigned to other, and successive wanderers. The death of other men, or the removal of other men may cause his removal, because the contingencies of his life are in the hands of other men, and beyond his own control.

Other men may appropriate the avails of active life, to supply old age with competence, and quiet release from temporal want ; but the avails of a minister's active life must be devoted to the Church, and to the world for Christ's sake ; and when his vigor fails, and the unpardonable sin of gray hairs silvers his head--then as a worthless, worn out servant

he must shift for himself, to live if he can, or die neglected.

Amidst all these conflicting powers, he must prove his ministry, to fulfil a divine requirement laid upon him. To do this, it will be clearly seen, that fortitude, and faith must enter largely into the evidence, which proves his work.

There must be a fortitude which falters not—a faith which penetrates the veil, to rest in the things unseen and eternal. To the Church, and the world, he must look for no adequate recompense. For this God has made promises in the future; and though he now receives more than he deserves—and more than he in justice is entitled to receive—yet not to the amount promised for service in the vineyard. This is a wise arrangement of the Master. No earthly wisdom can appreciate it—no earthly policy can apply it. It is to be spiritually discerned and spiritually applied by faith—faith which looks to the Church as a means and to God as its end.

God has made us ambassadors for Christ—plenipotentiaries of his government, to negotiate a peace with rebel man, upon the conditions of the plan of redemption. As Christ's ambassadors, the outfit, and compensation, must come from the government which sends them forth. What pertains to the wants of the body, is of minor importance; and these wants the Church is directed to provide, because the laborer is worthy of his hire. But for the more important necessities of the ministry, God has made special provision in promises, where faith can rest in secure hope of future reward.

These promises lift the spiritual man above the depressing contingencies of this world.

Whoever cannot forsake all that he hath, should not attempt to preach the gospel; for when tried by the afflictions consequent upon this high calling, he will be found wanting, in the most essential qualifications.

There is no station which man can occupy in this life, around which so many trials cluster. These are often of the most aggravating character. The minister must share his part of the common ills of life to which other men are subject; and besides these, he must bear the ills which afflict the Church of God, in a relation to them, which no other man can sustain. Is there apostacy, or backsliding, or clashing faction, or betrayal of Christ? the envenomed malice of this depraved world, visits these defections upon the watchman, with peculiar pleasure.

If the flock stray from the fold the shepherd must bear the blame. If spiritual death prevails, and the cause of Christ languishes, the minister is held responsible. It is his fault that the people are not aroused, and

the work of God revived. Does the Holy Spirit apply the word, and awaken inquiry, and solicitude, and gather sinners into the Kingdom of Christ? lying rumor and dark insinuation go forth to blast the reputation, and destroy the influence of the ministry. Satan transforms himself into an angel of light, and in the garb of a professed disciple, not unfrequently steals in upon the religious confidence. He would fill the pulsations of the religious heart, so as to give the more fatal stab. These trials must be experienced in order to be appreciated, or understood.

But if the trials of the ministry be many, and severe, the joys, and rewards are in proportion. There is no work on earth, so much united with heaven, and none so much connected with all that is redeeming here below, as the work of winning souls to Christ. The commission for this work bears the seal of our ascended Lord, and the promise of his presence and grace. Successful results contemplate battles fought, and triumphs won. They contemplate kingdoms, and crowns, and golden harps, filling every power, and capacity, with the fruition of heaven. In view of such a consummation, present trials are but light afflictions, designed to assist in working out the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.—Here are the reasons why the apostle could glory in infirmities—in distresses—in necessities—because of the large overbalance of rewards.

But faith must have its corresponding works, to make full proof of the ministry. The study, and the pulpit must bear witness that faith, and works are earnestly united, to make the man of God perfect, and thoroughly furnished. The charge of Paul to Timothy, loses none of its fitness in theory, or application now, because uttered in primitive times ; “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

Self instruction, is indispensable, to impart instruction to others.—Profitable instruction is the result of mental toil, sanctified by prayer, and adapted to the peculiar wants of men. An accurate knowledge of human nature, is indispensable to the success of the Christian Minister. Without this knowledge, the giant intellect may waste its strength in vain, where a much smaller capacity may be employed, with telling effect. In no pursuit in life, and in no profession, is a good supply of practical common sense more needed, than in the profession of the Ministry. It deals more than all other professions with the depraved, and deceitful heart. There should be skill in discerning the secret workings of the heart, from its outward manifestations.

To secure this qualification, there must be intimate self acquaintance. For as in water face answereth to face, so doth the heart of man to

man.

The pastor needs to become acquainted with the financial character, habits, and standing of his people. In a man's financial habits, as seen in his dealings with his fellow men—his heart—the *whole man* is more fully revealed than in all things else. The man appears in his dealings without disguise, and through this one source of knowledge, the christians value is measured, and registered. If he is penurious and overreaching in his worldly pursuits, if he is small and unmanly in his dealings with his fellow men, they will judge him as a christian by what he is as a man. Largeness of heart and smallness in dealings are extremes seldom found in the same character. Smallness in dealing may be connected with strict honesty—but not with large usefulness. The miser may have a form of godliness, but he cannot have a godly reputation. The spirit of benevolence and the spirit of selfishness cannot dwell together in the same heart. A pure pharisaism may be scrupulous in tithing the smallest matters—but wholly unscrupulous in passing over judgment and the love of God. A pure pharisaism may pray long and fervently and flourish a trumpet in alms-giving; and yet devote widows houses to answer the grasping selfishness of the heart. What multitudes barter their christian character and usefulness for pastry considerations. “The love of money is the root of all evil.” This is more than a proverb. It is the declared existence of a moral disease whose nature and extent must be understood. These necessities must be traced out in the financial habits of every day life. It is needful to know the *man*, to understand the value of the christian. It is needfull to know the easily besetting sins of the community, and of its individual members in order to apply divinely adapted remedies. The success of the ministry depends upon a diserimorative adaptation of the gospel, to the peculiar necessities of men. Every grade of character and intelect must be reached. The thoughts and intents of the heart must be discerned and laid open. Becoming all things to all men may by all means save some.

But an accepted gospel will not bring every sinner to Christ. While to some it will be the savor of life unto life, to others it will be the savour of death unto death. But if the watchman gives timely and faithful warning the blood of the dying soul will rest upon his own head.

Another item of testimony, is a question of time. The unfolding of the whole gospel, is not the work of a month, or a year. It is parallel with the christians full growth, and is the work of a life time.

The *full proof* of the ministry contemplates the relations of a settled pastor—a life labor in a given field.

The thorough and systematic study of the year, is but a work begun. This must be pursued, and perfected in successive years. Permanence, while it allows the fruits of mental toil to ripen in a rich experience, compels the necessity of meeting difficulties, instead of fleeing from them. The hireling fleeth because he is an hireling, and careth not for the flock. But the good shepherd giveth *his life* for the sheep. A changing ministry, is tempted to be irresponsible ; to flee from danger, and difficulty, when courage, and counsel are most needed. The shepherd should be at his post if ever, when the wolf enters the fold.

The pilot is needed in fair weather upon a dangerous coast ; but how much more is he needed when tempests rage to increase the perils of the deep. The bond between pastor and people should be intimate and mutual. Trials, and difficulties shonld have the effect to cement them in a closer union.

A Pastoral settlement at this day, is too much a religious farce—a settlement resting mainly, upon capricious contingencies. The pastor feels at liberty to break his engagements, when a better personal prospect opens and invites him elsewhere. He may leave his people at will, because they may at will—compel him to leave.

This feeling of irresponsibility is everywhere working untold mischief, both to the ministry, and the Church. Every change is liable to produce factions in the Church, and from these come instability, and consequent weakness. Every change of the ministry, produces a restlessness, if not a recklessness—causing the minister to regard himself as a homeless wanderer on the earth. No industrial pursuit will bear to be thus tantalized, and broken up by repeated changes. If the maxim is true any where that “a rolling stone gathers no moss,” its moral is most significant to a changing ministry. Both minister and people are subjected to a wasting friction, and both are mutually worn out to no good purpose. For such mutual injuries, there is no adequate compensation. The one can form no habits of thorough, and systematic study,—and can lay no extended plans of usefulness. The other is tempted to cultivate itching ears for novel gratifications, much more than the christian graces. They will be liable to acquire a morbid religious appetite for anything but sound doctrine.

These results everywhere so apparent, indicate the necessity of time to make full proof of the ministry. Plans of usefulness must extend over a series of years, to provide for the necessities of childhood unto maturity—to cultivate the seed sown until ripened, and gathered into the garner of God.

To prove the ministry fully in the relations of a pastor, more than one witness is required.

It avails but little for the minister to say as did Ruth to Naomi—"thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God ; where thou lodgest I will lodge, and where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried ! God do so to me, and more also, if aught but death, part me and thee." Such a resolution must be confirmed by the Church in whose hands are its conditions. Compelled by any effective caprice to change often his field of labor, the minister may make full proof of his capacity to endure hardness, in the hardest allotment of the Christian soldier, but he cannot make full proof of his ministry as a settled pastor. The co-operation of his people is an indispensable part of the testimony, to make full proof of his ministry with them. The duties of the Church to a settled pastor, it is of vital importance to understand, and to discharge.

This will introduce us to the second part of our subject, (viz :) *The evidence required of the Church, to prove the ministry.*

The arrangement which God ordained in the law of Moses, for the religious instruction of the Jews, is worthy of careful study. It is a model of divine wisdom, and directly pertinent to our subject, as important testimony.

In the possession of the land of promise, the tribe of Levi was to have no inheritance with his brethren. The Lord was his inheritance. To this tribe was committed the religious instruction of the other twelve tribes. To this tribe pertained the duties of the priesthood,—the tabernacle, and the service of the altar of sacrifice. For the sustenance of the Levites the twelve tribes were made responsible by tithes and offerings. The proportion of tribes stood as one to twelve, and the number of the people, about as one to sixteen. This divine apportionment was made with a full knowledge of man's capacities, and man's necessities. As the twelve tribes prospered, the increased tithes and offerings, would give to the tribe of Levi his share in the prosperity, and as the twelve suffered adversity, the decreased tithe would make the Levite, an equal sharer in the reverses.

The pastor of a specific Cuurch, sustains the relation of the Levite—whose inheritance under God, is the people over whom he is placed. Let the Church make common cause with the pastor, as in the divine arrangement made with the Jews, and there is scarcely no Church so feeble, as not to be able to support the gospel. Should common cause be made as God required of the Jews, there is no question of the more bountiful bestowment of temporal and spiritual blessings, as a divine

reward.

Why should the members of the Church lay up a given amount of property, more or less, every year and the pastor who devotes his time to spiritual things lay up nothing, and have no claim upon the property of his people? By what rule of right may a Church increase in wealth, and the servant of the Church have no claim upon that wealth?

Why may a private christian lay aside property to make old age comfortable, and still put it out of the power of his minister to do any such thing? If the Church is weakened in numbers, and in wealth, why should not the pastor bear his share in the reverses of providence?

It is certain that a minister cannot devote his whole time to the spiritual welfare of his people, and at the same time, be burdened with the temporal demands of his family. As his mission to the Church is of a spiritual character, he sustains in this work, the position of a servant. But he cannot serve God and mammon. If his time, and strength, are divided between the demands of his household, and of the Church both must suffer. If the church by neglect, subjects him to harrassing solicitude in temporal things, they are the losers in spiritual things.

In the Jewish arrangement to which we have referred, the Levite was released from public service at the age of sixty years. The high priest held his office during life assisted in old age by his colleagues in the sacred office. As his duties were not burdensome, they were continued to the limit of his ability to discharge them.

But the priest and Levite, received adequate provision when laid aside by age, or infirmity. After a period of thirty years of active service, they were paroled pensioners, upon the blessings of God to Israel for the remainder of life. The spirit of this arrangement, was once the rule of the Church in New England.

When a minister has given the best of his days to the service of the Church, for the consideration of food and raiment, it is not reasonable that his old age should be neglected, and unprovided for. If death shall make his wife a widow, and his children orphans, there is no provision made for them. Their wants are forgotten, ere the sod has become green upon the fresh grave of their protector. Forbidden by his duties to the Church to make provision for his family while living; and when he is dead they are soon forgotten, as having ever sustained any relation to the Church, different from the widow, and fatherless of any other man.—Death cancels all obligations of the Church to the ministers family.—Dead men's services, it is not the rule of the Church to recompense.

For neglect of the Levite, God often visited his people with severe

displeasure. If neglect of these relative duties is any less a sin now, than in ancient times, we have failed to understand the plain teachings of the Bible.

We are aware that the plea is often made, that the ministry are poor economist's--that they are unskillful financiers--that they have a compensation sufficient, and could lay up money, if they only knew how to make a wise use of their income. A penurious disciple is apt to say, "If our minister cannot live upon his salary, he can go elsewhere, and we can get another who will be satisfied with a liberal support." Such pleas are usually the essence of ignorance and selfishness combined. It is in many cases like subjecting a man to live upon one meal a day, and then charge his hunger to a lack of economy. We admit the truth--that ministers are often chargeable with deficient financial ability, and experience. It is also true that the economy which some would have them practice, would be met with the charge of niggardly dealing, and character, and usefulness, would be sacrificed thereby. Their accusers, would be the first to complain of the economy they require.

There are numberless demands upon a minister's income, because he is a minister, of which the Church have little or no knowledge--demands by the Church, and for the Church, which no private member is called to meet.

Besides it is hardly fair to compel the purchase upon credit, of every article consumed, at barter prices, and then charge the exorbitant expense to a lack of economy. It does require good economy to live upon a small salary paid in promises, or to lay up money from unpaid obligations. We believe it to be the duty of the Church to adopt the pastor and his family as their own children, and to make common cause with them for their sustenance. It is the right and duty of the pastor, to adopt the Church as his inheritance.

As he labors in spiritual things, it is needful that he should be wholly given to his work. For his temporal wants, it is the duty of the Church to provide—not only while in active service, but also for the wants of inactive age. When the pastor can rely upon such a provision, one of his heaviest burdens is removed. The dark hours of solicitude which now cause despondency and forboding want, would be illumined with light. Then the oft repeated inquiry—what will become of my family? is answered. For Christ's sake they belong to the Church, and when his work is finished, he can die in peace. Now he is determined to know nothing but Christ, and him crucified, because now he *can* serve his generation by the will of God.

The usefulness of the ministry depends very much upon the co-operation of the people. The lack of service on their part, compels a lack of service on the part of the ministry.

When a minister's investments for future need, consist in confident reliance upon the justice, and generosity of his people, then may his whole energies be under command, to make full proof of his ministry.

It will be seen by these considerations, that a permanent, and useful ministry, is a matter committed very much to the will, and co-operation of the Church. The pastor's duties to his people will be discharged, as they fulfill their duties to him.

But it often occurs, that a minister's popularity is greatest at the beginning of his labors, and continues to wane, until the people are clamorous for his removal. In such cases the fault is generally mutual.

The pastor is chosen, and settled upon short acquaintance, and with very little prayerful consideration. The people may have looked for prosperity and success, without co-operation, and become cold, and selfish over the disappointment. They had placed their confidence in an arm of flesh, and not in the Lord, from whom alone cometh the increase.

Disaffection, when once engendered, is not apt to lessen. The relation entered upon was but an experiment, instead of a solemn reality, by which they were to live, and in which they were to die. They were married with the consideration, that the covenant might at any time be broken, and hardness of heart procure a divorce.

There is one difficulty ever connected with the pastoral relations, for which no adequate remedy has yet been found. The minister is a man subject to like passions as other men. This is unfortunate; but there is no disguising the fact. He is compassed about with infirmity. He does not understand all mystery, nor all knowledge. He has not the tongue of an angel. He cannot remove mountains. His faults are very conspicuous, by virtue of his position. He is liable to feel sad under afflictions, and to be desponding under discouragements. From the influence of unexpected trials, his self-possession may forsake him. His fortitude is not always proof against ingratitude and reproach. He never becomes entirely insensible, on the one hand to flattery, nor on the other, to scandal and backbiting. Sickness, and old age, seem to affect him, very much as they do other men. If he were perfect, he might be able to give satisfaction to all, who assume to be conservators over his conduct. If he could fill the ideal of every required standard—if he could live upon angels food, so as to perform more labor at less expense—if he could preach by inspiration without study, and satisfy both the bad, and

the good, without giving offense to either—if he were not liable to sin, or grow old and infirm—or to sicken, and die like other men; and in fine, if he were not a worm of the dust; a sinner to be saved by grace, and one who must through great tribulation enter into the kingdom of God, then might the Church possess in him an *ascension gift*, of every desired qualification. Then, if such a pastor could find a perfect people, free from all jealousy, and evil speaking, and selfishness, and faultfinding—a people after his own heart, then might he be content to dwell with them. But, as pastor and people are only redeemed sinners, and are in constant need of restraining grace, each is called to put on charity above all things and mutually bear each others burdens. Thus may they dwell together in unity.

Another requisite of the people, to prove the ministry, is a capacity to hear the gospel preached unto them. The gift of hearing, is more essential than the gift of speaking, to make the word preached effectual. To hear with earnest attention; to hear with a mind free from prejudice, and open to conviction; to hear as hungering and thirsting for spiritual nourishment; to hear as listening to the *words of God*, and as bound to the judgment seat,—are qualifications of very rare occurrence. A gifted minister, can prepare but few superior sermons. The deficiency may be remedied by the gift of hearing. But the gift of hearing as described, is possessed by very few in any one congregation.—The larger part of an audience, never give earnest attention to a whole sermon. Some, seem to have a settled arrangement to sleep during a portion of the time of public worship. Others are listless and indifferent—whose minds like the eyes of the fool, are roving to the ends of the earth—unappreciating, and unblest. It is safe to say, that a minister preaches the gospel, to less than one fourth part of his congregation. The rest are forgetful hearers, whose characteristics are described in the parable of the sower.

It so happens, that the pastoral relations are seldom disturbed by the earnest, and prayerful hearers of the gospel. The connection between the closet, and the pulpit, is too intimate and full of blessings, to allow of sacriligious invasion. But such as hear but little, or not at all—or hear for criticism, and faultfinding, are usually the source of those evils which defeat the designs of the gospel, and unsettle both the Church, and the ministry.

The faithful hearer proves the word, by being a doer. But the forgetful hearer treasures up in memory no correct impress of his own character, and in his present state, and future prospects, appears the

negative proof of an accepted gospel ; a savor of death, unto death.

A good hearer, is the best possible remedy for a poor speaker. The hearers fixed and earnest attention, is of great service to stimulate, and encourage the preacher. There is a living sympathy between the pew and the pulpit, and between the closet and the study. The one prepares the seed, and the other the soil, for its reception. God gives the early and the latter rain, and the bountiful harvest.

The indifferent features; the vacant expression of a forgetful hearer--the wandering eye and roving imagination of thoughtless irreverence, are less hopeful objects of address, than the dry bones of the valley of vision. These revived at the voice of the prophet. One earnest hearer is worth any number of stupid, and forgetful hearers, to encourage the hope of blessing, from the dispensation of the gospel.

The preacher, will often be dull, and uninteresting; but there is nothing so much calculated to make him dull, as the listless inattention of his audience. Like people, like priest, was long ago written, but as true now as it ever was.

We may specify in conclusion the necessity of keeping the heart. Out of it are the issues of life, and out of it proceed evil thoughts; and that world of iniquity has never been tamed of mankind. This world so full of scandal and evil speaking, stops not at the sacred enclosure of the Church. The holiest relations of earth, the depraved heart loves to invade. The most sacred interests of earth, it loves to set on fire and destroy. A little fire is easily eukindled to a mighty flame, which mocks all efforts to control or subdue.

Whoever makes scandal hunting a business, whether he be minister or people, will never be out of employment; and when it prevails by countenance and patronage, to sustain long the pastoral relations, is impossible. It needs but an irresponsible insinuation, to start lying rumor on its legitimate mission of discord and ruin. The disaffected heart is a contagion, whose power of infection, is in the state of other diseased hearts, which open the ear of curiosity to the lips of malice. It is the disposition to *hear*, which gives fatal effect to falsehood. A refusal to hear the lips of flattery, and deceit, is a sanitary remedy to prevent what it cannot entirely cure. To flattery, and scandal, the pastor's ears must be deaf.—He must attain unto a capacity of endurance—and of stoical indifference if he would be useful and happy. He must be prepared to absorb scandal without contamination, or a reproduction of it; and as a mediator in social jealousies, he must pour oil upon the troubled sea of strife.—But the people have much to do, in their own peculiar province. It is

theirs to still the voice of complaint, by frank, and confidential intercourse. It is theirs to merge all differences in the common weal. It is theirs to meet every foe with spiritual weapons, whether he be in the garb of an angel of light, or the undisguised, and open calumniator. It is theirs to bear the pastors frailties, and each others burdens also. It is theirs to stand united in action, united in love, and united in Christ. It is theirs to carry defection, and complaints, and reproaches, to the mercy seat, where the only effectual remedy is found. Words of encouragement, and sympathy, strengthen the weak, and refresh the fainting. Words fitly spoken, go forth on a mission of life, as the still small voice of God.—Lips hallowed in the closet, will not utter perverse things. The unruly tongue will be restrained by heart supplication to God, for grace to bring every thought in subjection, to the obedience of Christ. Thus prepared, the seed of the kingdom will fall upon a hopeful soil, to spring up, and bear much fruit, to the glory and praise of God.

The unfailing promise is made “whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.” This is your encouragement to labor; to scatter the good seed of the kingdom with an unsparing hand. For he that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly. The same premise touching the harvest of the seed sown, is one of fearful import to the wicked.—The seeds of sin and death existing in the natural proclivities of the soul; nurtured and multiplied by an irreligious life, betoken a harvest united with lamentation and woe; for he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption. Faint not nor grow weary in the vineyard because much of the good seed may fall by the wayside, or upon stony ground, or among thorns, and thereby fail of the desired result. Paul may plant and Apollos water, but God must give the increase. Be not weary in well doing for in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, is a command which obligates us to work for the salvation of others. ; Our destiny is interwoven with the destiny of other souls. We cannot live unto ourselves if we would. Others will feel our influence while we live.—Every effort for our own salvation is an invitation to the dying to turn and live. God has wisely adapted this work to every capacity. No act so insignificant as not to have its eternal consequences. God has made no provision for idlers. The injunction is to *all* go work in my vineyard.

Forget not as servants of Christ, that conflicts, and crosses, and strifes and battles, and triumphs, checker that narrow and shining way which leadeth unto life. Tares will be sown in the midst of the wheat, and even there, will mature, for angel reapers to separate them.

The Saviour may be crucified afresh, to make his toiling servants often sad in this tearful pilgrimage. Perils surround every footstep, to impress the warning—"Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." With due regard to the instructions of the Great Teacher, your mutual testimony will make full proof of the ministry, not only in sowing the seed but in gathering the harvest. Keep in remembrance the important truth, that the relations this day consummated, must needs be, of very short continuance. The trial and proof of the ministry here, will soon be closed up for the adjudication of a higher court. May it then appear, that, together you have lived, and loved, and labored, and triumphed, and the final award of "*well done*" seal the verdict of sovereign grace.



